

**Amendments to the Claims:**

Please replace the original claim set with the following replacement claim set:

1. (currently amended) A system for removing a defective server from a server pool comprising:

a first server associated with a first buddy server and a second buddy server, the first server being operative to transmit a first ping signal to the first buddy server and to transmit a second ping signal to the second buddy server and to receive a first responsive signal from the first buddy server and to receive a second responsive signal from the second buddy server;

a server database operative to maintain the association between the first server and the first buddy server and to maintain the association between the first server and the second buddy server;

wherein the first server is further operative to send a first buddy server down signal to the server database, in response to a determination that the first buddy server is down; and

wherein the server database is further operative to associate the first server with a third buddy server in response to the receipt of the first buddy server down signal.

2. (currently amended) The system recited in Claim 1, wherein the first server is further operative to send a second buddy server down signal to the server database, in response to a determination that the second buddy server is down and wherein the server database is further operative to associate the first server with a fourth buddy server in response to the receipt of the second buddy server down signal.

3. (original) The system recited in Claim 1, wherein the first ping signal comprises an ICMP ping signal and wherein the second ping signal comprises an ICMP ping signal.

4. (original) The system recited in Claim 1, wherein the server database comprises a SQL database maintained on a SQL server.

5. (currently amended) The system recited in Claim 1, wherein the server database maintains a list of active servers comprising the first server, the first buddy server and the second buddy server, and wherein, in response to the first buddy server down signal, the server database is further operative to remove the first buddy server from the list of active servers.

6. (original) The system recited in Claim 5, further comprising a client connected to the server database and wherein the list of active servers is used to connect the client to one of the servers in the list of active servers.

7 - 25. (canceled)